

Good, Good Father

1 Peter 1:13-21

Introduction

Good morning, my name is Brad and I'm one of the pastors here. Now is the time in our weekly gathering where we open up the Scriptures together. This is more than just how we do church; it's a sacred moment in which this community gets to experience heaven touching earth; it's the living words of God spoken to us. Today the majority of those words will come from the letter of First Peter in a sermon series we've subtitled, "Everyday Exiles".

I would encourage you to open your Bibles with me to 1 Peter 1:13-21 as we receive a message titled, "Good, Good Father". You can find that passage on page 1014 if you're using one of the Bibles in the chairs. So that it's easier to follow along, here's where we're headed. The main idea is a simple idea with profound implications: If you have a good Father, you'll want to be like him. The breakdown of the passage begins and ends with the same ultimate point of application: Set your hope fully on God (in verse 13 and then verses 20-21). Doing that, however, means two things: first, that you desire to please your Father by being like him (in verses 14-16), and second, that you fear to displease your Father by not being like him (in verses 17-19).

With that said, if you are able, please stand with me to honor the reading of God's word. Again, today's passage is 1 Peter 1:10-12. Church, hear the word of the Lord:

¹³ Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." ¹⁷ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, ¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. 1 Peter 1:13-21

May the Word preached here today echo in our hearts and among the nations. And all God's people said, *Amen*. You may be seated.

Exposition

A couple of weeks ago we experienced a cool evidence of grace in our household. Our oldest daughter is four years old. She's full of life and princesses and unicorns and adventures. But then one day she approached Katie and asked a simple question in a cute-but-utterly-genuine way. She asked, "Mommy, will you teach me to do what you do?" Katie was like, "Well, I stay at home with you girls. So, you want me to teach you how to be a mommy?" And our daughter said, "Yes!"

It was a special moment of encouragement for Katie, who often feels the pinch of putting vocational aspirations on pause in this season of life. But more than that, it was a vivid reminder that being created in the image of God means we're hardwired to view life through the lens of certain desires. One of those desires, generally speaking, is to be like others whom we admire. Specifically in the context of parent-child relationships, it means—for better or worse—following in the example of our parents. And so we can draw out this truth, which lies at the heart of today's passage, if you have a good parent, you'll want to be like that parent.¹

From the beginning of Peter's letter to marginalized Christians, he makes the connection for them that they have been given the priceless blessing of a good parent; they have been born again to a living hope because they have been adopted as children of a living Father.² In fact, the first two sermons in this series have laid out how that adoption came about and the benefits that come with it. These were realities great enough to sustain them with a deep sense of belonging even in the midst of being social misfits.³

The turn that Peter takes in today's passage is this: in light of all this, here's how we should live. More pointedly, because we have the best Father, being like him is the best way to be.⁴ This is the cry of the psalmist's heart when he writes:

²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you?

¹ Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 85

² 1 Peter 1:3

³ 1 Peter 1:3-12

⁴ Grudem, 85

And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. Psalm 73:25

To become a child of the heavenly Father is to stand in awe of him and be drawn to be like him. Peter himself knew this well. Before becoming fully united to Jesus, he came face to face with the glory of the “Everlasting Father”.⁵ After having fished all night without catching anything, Jesus told Peter to let down his nets once more, and this time they immediately catch so many fish that nets are breaking and boats are sinking. Interestingly,

When Simon Peter saw this, [he didn't give Jesus a polite golf clap,] he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" Luke 5:8, NIV

Why such a dramatic response? Because to see God for who he is and be drawn to him *immediately* reveals how far short you fall in comparison.⁶ So here's one of the many paradoxes of the Christian life. The tender Father by whom you are adopted is also the terrifying foreman of the universe. We can choose to water him down or dress him up in our own minds, but if we are to take him at *his* word, he's both.

The person who has captured this idea most memorably for me is the author of the children's books, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, C.S. Lewis. In one of the books a couple of characters are talking about Aslan, a great lion king who represents God. One character nervously asks the other, “Is he—quite safe?” His friend responds,

*Safe? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you.*⁷

So Peter, now knowing about the Father by what he has experienced through the Son, is set on an honest view of God. As we walk through his next steps for these scattered Christians (us included!), you're going to see how he holds that tension in balance.

Application - Set Your Hope Fully on God - v. 13

He begins in verse 13 with the same point of application in which he will return to at the end of today's passage. We read,

⁵ Isaiah 9:6

⁶ Romans 3:23; Edmund Clowney, *The Message of First Peter*, The Bible Speaks Today Series, Loc 925

⁷ C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

¹³ Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13

This is the first major pivot in the letter, where Peter transitions from teaching us about God's salvation to coaching us in what to do with it.⁸ And as people living in Western culture, this is what we live for, right? Enough with the theory, it's time to roll up our shirt sleeves. And that's precisely the language that Peter uses here.⁹ Literally, it's "gird up the loins of your mind". Hmm, don't think I've ever done that before. What's that even mean?

Turns out it's Old Testament imagery for how you would prepare to run or fight if you were rocking a robe. You gather up the bottom of the robe, pull it between your legs, and tie it around your waist. But Peter isn't telling us to literally do that. To "gird up the loins of *your mind*" means being ready to do something I find myself teaching my children all the time right now (and simultaneously realizing that God is also teaching me)—obey *the first time* (not the tenth time you've been told).¹⁰

Combine that phrase with "and being sober-minded" and you've got what almost seems like military language. Being mentally prepared for action and sober-minded (rather than intoxicated or distracted) is just what you want in a soldier on the eve of battle.¹¹ But what separates the good soldier from the elite is just how resolute he or she is. And that's what Peter expresses when he says to "set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ". This isn't "so much an attitude to be cultivated as a reality to be recognized."¹² Do that, and you're not just ready to fight, you're ready to win; you've got the ultimate victory in mind and you'll fight for it to the death—[warrior yell]!

I. Desire to Please Your Father By Being Like Him - vv. 14-16

Alright Peter, you got me all fired up. Who are we fighting? We casting out demons? We taking over the city for Jesus? We reaching an unreached people group? General Peter begins to tell us in verse 14:

⁸ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, Loc 2719-2721; Grudem, 80

⁹ Jobes, Loc 2770

¹⁰ Grudem, 80-81

¹¹ Grudem, 81; Jobes, Loc 2782-2785

¹² Clowney, Loc 838

14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 1 Peter 1:14

Oh. Well, that's not exactly the crucible I was expecting. So we're supposed to be lean, mean fighting machines in order to be...obedient children. Huh? This is like taking Navy Seals to the playground. What just happened? What just happened is we have come to the first implication in setting your hope fully on God: that you desire to please your Father by being like him.

No doubt God the Father saves people through the Son in order to give them the warrior power of the Spirit. No doubt a true spiritual salvation brings with it a true spiritual warfare. But the most common battlefield for the Christian will be *within his or her own body*. To set your hope fully on God, and live with any endurance as an exile here, it means hosting constant battle. Yes, the ultimate war is already won and the victory supplied, but it must be *applied*. As bishop J.C. Ryle put it, "You and sin must quarrel, if you and God are to be friends."¹³

You can't just go back to the way you responded to your urges before you were saved. You might say, "Well, I didn't really do bad things before I became a Christian."

- But consider the way hateful thoughts toward others took their ease in your mind without even a sense of anything bad about such a thought.
- Or remember how you never had a proper view of yourself, either much better than you actually are or much worse. In either direction, it was you who had the final say, not God—and that is the height of prideful rebellion.
- Or think of how sexual images or romantic fantasies paraded in your body without the bouncer of a godly conscience or the power of an indwelling Spirit.

These are the ways of the world—they don't know any better. But not you, Christian. You've lost any claim on the privilege of ignorance. Rather, as verses 15 and 16 tell us,

15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:15-16

It's not just that you've learned a new way of doing things. No, you've been personally called by name. It was God himself who got you started on this path. It was him who at great cost to himself adopted you as your loving Father.¹⁴ And it's not like now's the time

¹³ David Powlinson, *Speaking the Truth in Love: Counsel in Community*, 36

¹⁴ Grudem, 83-84

for you to pay him back for the trouble. No, he's given you such intimate quarters with him so you can see him for who he is—holy.

Holy is a word that means “set apart” or “distinct”. In God's case, he is the sum of all perfections. And even though we are like him because we are made in his image, on our best day we are not God. He is infinitely different from us in the best of ways.

And seeing how high and holy he is, and yet at the same time wrapping our minds around him being our intimate Father, it's the perfect recipe for genuinely admiring him, and wanting to please him, and yearning to be like him. Here, Peter quotes from Leviticus, better known as that Old Testament book that sabotages your Bible reading plan each year. It says,

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. Leviticus 19:1-2

This shows us that God has always been concerned with having a people set apart from the ways of the world, a people who desire to please him by being like him.¹⁵ In the words of the authors of *Everyday Church*,

This holiness knows no boundaries. It defines our friendships, marriages, work, leisure, finances, and politics. Holiness is as much about what you do on a Monday morning on the factory floor as it is about what you do on a Sunday morning in a church gathering. Holiness is as much about the kind of neighbor you are as it is about the kind of church member you are. Holiness is as much about who you are when you are holding a steering wheel as it is about who you are when you are holding a Bible.¹⁶

And here it makes sense as to why Peter would be writing about this to weak, marginalized Christians. It is not our similarities with the world that draws them to us. It is our differences.¹⁷ Just as our Father is set apart, may we please him by being set apart too.

¹⁵ Jobes, Loc 2831-2838

¹⁶ Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Everyday Church: Gospel Communities on Mission*, 48

¹⁷ Chester and Timmis, 49

II. Fear to Displease Your Father By Not Being Like Him - vv. 17-19

This brings about the other side of what it means to set your hope fully on God: that you not only desire to please your Father by being like him, you also fear to displease your Father by not being like him. Peter continues in verse 17,

17 And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, 1 Peter 1:17

Notice Peter uses the idea of calling again. It's like, 'Yes, God called on you as Savior, and now you call on him as Father—but just remember—the One you call on as Father is also Judge.' Whoa, whoa, hang on Peter, this seems like a contradiction. Are you saying that the Father who has saved us and intends for us to burst into his throne room for grace anytime, like a child in his father's office,¹⁸ this is the same Father who is going to judge us in such a way that we should be fearful of him? I have no category for that.

Or at least I didn't until I my early twenties. That was the first time I ever saw a father discipline his son firmly and then tenderly hold him and comfort him and instruct him until the little boy was giggling in his arms. I literally stood there and stared like I had just spotted Bigfoot. I had never seen or experienced anything like it, and so a whole new category in my brain was having to open up.

And with it a whole new way of relating to God not just as best buddy or old fart, but as Savior and Judge—in other words, as Father. And to relate to him for who he is (not who we'd prefer) means realizing that even though we need not fear the final judgment because of the salvation he has given, we have every reason to fear his judgment in this life.¹⁹ Why? Because he is a good Father, and a good father disciplines his children.

²⁰ This, the author of Hebrews explains:

7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. Hebrews 12:7-10

¹⁸ Hebrews 4:16

¹⁹ Grudem, 86-87

²⁰ Deuteronomy 8:5; Proverbs 3:12; 13:24;

And there it is again. How ironic that a passage about the fearful realities of God's discipline ends with him doing it in order to give us something good, to share something sacred with us. What is it? His holiness. Getting to be like him. It's not that different from how Peter follows his statement on God's disciplinary judgment. He continues in verses 18 and 19,

¹⁸ knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. 1 Peter 1:18-19

The appeal here is the unfathomable cost the Father paid in order to save us. It was not that which is most costly to us, things like silver or gold, but that which was the most costly to him, the precious blood of Christ. And the very thing that Peter says the blood set you free from was not fear or guilt or shame, nor even sin, although Jesus' blood does free you from all those things. The specific thing that Peter points to is freedom from something you may not have associated much with the blood of Jesus: "the futile ways inherited from your forefathers".²¹

Because of the price the Father has paid through the Son, you don't have to follow in the useless attempts of your family line to be at home in this world. No, the holiness that the Father expects of his children, it really is possible. A lifetime of being everyday exiles who are pleasing to their Father, is not too audacious a thing to hope for.

Application - Set Your Hope Fully on God - vv. 20-21

From here Peter is going to end at the same application with which he started: to set your hope fully on God. Let's read how he reaches this conclusion, in verses 20-21:

²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. 1 Peter 1:20-21

The application turns on the phrase "so that"—like, 'I've told you all this so *that*...all this has happened so *that*'—so that what? So "that your faith and hope are in God." If these Christians (and us) are to live as exiles, as people who don't just go along with the world

²¹ Jobes, Loc 2933-2936

because we don't belong to the world, and if we are to do this in everyday life, accepting it as the normal Christian experience, then the only way that's even remotely possible is if our faith and hope are in God.

- The only way you're going to continue desiring to please your Father, is if you have hope that he can actually be pleased.
- The only way you're going to continue fearing to displease your Father, is if you have hope that he can actually be pleased.
- The only way you're going to continue wanting to be like your Father, is if you have hope that he can actually be pleased.

In the film *The King's Speech* Prince Albert, who has lived under the severe disappointment of his father due a serious speech impediment—which may have been the deepest source of his stuttering in itself—says this following his father's death: "I was informed, after the fact, my father's last words were [this]: "[Albert] has more guts than the rest of his brothers put together." Prince Albert then pauses a long time and says, "[I wish he could have said] that to my face."²²

Church, what does your heavenly Father say of you? He is the high and lofty King who has never spoken with you face to face. How do you have hope that he is not severely disappointed, and that your shortcomings aren't just distancing him all the more?

Because before the foundation of the world your Father had chosen a Son to suffer so he could choose you to save. You may have heard it said, "When he was on the cross, I was on his mind." Perhaps. At least it makes for a feel-good song. But what I do know without a doubt, according to this inspired word, is that *before the world was created*, you were on his mind. In fact, from eternity past to the time Jesus was finally revealed on the earth, you were on his mind. It was all, Peter says, "for the sake of you, who through him are believers in God". Yes, we can even say that the Father raised him from the dead and gave him glory to show—what?—that you were on his mind.²³

Conclusion

All this intended to lead us to a confident hope that he actually can be pleased with you, that he is eager to be pleased with you, and that through Jesus Christ, he *is* pleased with you.

²² *The King's Speech*, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1504320/>

²³ Clowney, Loc 998; Grudem, 90

Don't forget, Peter knew this well. One day when Jesus took him and couple other disciples up high on a mountain he was transfigured in glorious light before them. There he appeared talking with Moses and Elijah, and Peter, in awe, began mumbling something about building tabernacles for all three of them so they could stay there forever. We read that

⁵ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." ⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. Matthew 17:5-8

Yes, church, our heavenly Father says of his Son that he is well-pleased, and we do well to fall on our faces and be terrified; but only so that we can be touched by his Son and told to rise and have no fear. And to follow him into a boat and up a mountain and eventually to a cross and an empty tomb is to hear the Father say *of you* now, and one day to *your* face, "This is my beloved son or this is my beloved daughter, with whom I am well pleased." What a good Father. Doesn't it make you want to be like him?

On the night Jesus was betrayed, he took a loaf of bread and broke it and said to his disciples, "This is my body, which is broken for you; eat this in remembrance of me." He also took a cup of wine, and after blessing it, gave it to his disciples and said, "This cup is the new covenant marked by the shedding of my blood. For as often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you announce the Lord's death until he returns." **Today we are announcing that through Jesus Christ we can be imitators of God, as beloved children.**²⁴

Our tradition here at Antioch is to come forward and break off a piece of bread and dip it in the juice. There will be stations here in the front; gluten-free bread will be available to your right. If you're a baptized believer, come and remember who you are and whose you are. If you're a believer but not yet baptized, before coming to the table, we would love to help you first come and declare your faith publicly through baptism. If you're not a Christian, this sacred symbol is not for you, but rather than taking communion, we encourage you to take Christ. He has made himself available to you this very moment. There will be pastors and prayer warriors in the back to talk and pray with you about any need you have. Let's pray.

²⁴ Ephesians 5:1

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